

June 4, 2012

**REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 4, 2012**

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on Monday, June 4, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield.

Present: Councilors Drake, Hurley, Kotkin, Roberts, Deputy Mayor Console, and Chairperson Hemmann. Absent: Councilors Manousos, McAlister and Montinieri.

Also present: Jeff Bridges, Town Manager, RaeAnn Palmer, Assistant Town Manager and Dolores G. Sassano, Town Clerk.

Dolores Sassano led the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

PUBLIC HEARING

George Ruhe, 956 Clovercrest Cir. commented that he is in support of the resolution authorizing the refunding of general obligation bonds.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Frank Sorano, 102 Jameswell Rd., commented on the underground water problem. He is here as a public obligation to his neighbors to help them avoid what his family is going through. He noted the 85-page document he provided was overlooked by council members. Mr. Sorano referenced some laws regarding his own responsibility with regards to uphill water seepage and commented on the lack of flood insurance that is available to these types of situations. He thinks this should be looked at more by the Town as town property is being destroyed. The Town is liable for it. He stated Jameswell Road is undermined by the water. He said the problem is called perched water table, not an uncommon problem. He feels this is a neighborhood problem; the town should protect its tax-paying residents from this. He suggested the use of emergency funds to correct this problem. He stated that he has done everything he can to control the situation. He commented on the lack of coordination and the Town not doing their job in helping to correct the problem.

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Ave. commented about the stop signs in his neighborhood.

Larry Spellacy, 215 Pine Lane, Chairman of the Memorial Day Parade gave a brief recap of the parade. He stated that it was a very nice day; they had excellent representation from our state government, Nancy Wyman, the Lieutenant Governor as well as US Senator Richard Blumenthal, members of the Connecticut Assembly and state and house were in attendance as well as an excellent showing of council members, Board of Education members and town officials. He thanked everyone for their support and participation in our parade; the attendance was quite good to honor our veterans which is what our Memorial Day parade is all about. As a welcome home to veterans, he noted that World War II veteran and a current member of the

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armed forces who has seen combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, who happened to be a woman, were selected as parade marshals. He added that a very solemn ceremony was then conducted at Village Cemetery to honor those men and women who gave their lives so that we might enjoy freedom here in the United States. Mr. Spellacy thanked Council for their support, particularly, for providing the funding necessary for putting on the parade and stated that they accomplished the goal of staying within the budget. He stated that their theme was Welcome Home to Veterans and he hopes that all veterans feel welcomed here in our community.

George Ruhe, 956 Clovercrest Cir., commented on his trip to Washington with the American Warriors to visit the various memorials dedicated to men and women who had died in the various wars that our country has been involved in. The arrival into Washington as well as the return to Hartford was awe-inspiring. Mr. Ruhe spoke of a band in Washington with citizens welcoming all of them; it was very moving. They visited the memorials while in Washington and mentioned how people thanked them as they were walking through. He reflected that a person should go down and look at the memorials privately to really feel what it all means. He spoke of standing in front of the wall at the World War II Memorial with some 4,000 stars, each star represented 100 men who were killed defending their country and he stated that they are the people who should be honored.

Paul LaPerriere, 66 Brookside Cir., commented on Mr. Sorano's water problem and shared with the council some water problems that he has been experiencing as well. He stated that he believed his water problem was linked with Mr. Sorano's water problem. In 2005, Brookside Circle became a sewage back-up for sixty-plus homes and hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage was done to many of his neighbors homes. The MDC said that the storm was a 100-year event and also claimed and continues to blame residents that pump sump water into the main lines was the cause of most of their issues. The MDC was embarking on a multi-million dollar project to police the abusers and fix the problem. After talking with residents of the neighborhood who have lived there for 40-plus years, they all had the same reply. He stated that he is the original owner of this house and he has never had water in our basement. The preliminary investigation that was done by a private law firm indicated that there were signs of potential negligence on the part of the MDC. The MDC took zero accountability for any of it despite the same issue continuously occurring four more times to my home to the tune of \$24,000 between 2006 and 2011. He stated this is not water coming into a house as a result of water table being too high or water pouring through basement windows and that all five times came from the MDC sewer system. He noted that he as well as others believe that Mr. Sorano's issues as well as some of his past problems are potentially linked to ignorance and the lack of accountability of MDC. He asked if it is coincidence that 2005 seems to be the magic year that these issues came to a head? Suddenly after 20 years there, his property is getting destroyed. He noted that the common denominator in both of these stories is MDC. They should be held accountable for the work they are doing, especially if it creates new problems on other peoples' property. He asked the Council to do their civic duty and get experts outside of town into the area to find out exactly how this has happened. He stated that there are a lot of people in town that also need assurance that this Council they elected, truly have their best interests as priority one.

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Robert Cobb, 99 Meadowview Drive, thanked the Council members for their work on behalf of the residents of Wethersfield. He commented that he supports any resident that is going through what the Serano's are going through. He stated that the problem is not just Mr. Serano's problem just under his house alone, but is also affecting other neighborhood houses. He stated there is no easy answer to this and it is a devastating situation. He added a special assessment or accumulation of funds such as a rainy day fund should be used in cases such as this. He also commented on the costs that is associated with the all-day kindergarten and the high school renovation project and feels that a lot more could have been done with that money.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Rd., commented on the high costs for high school renovation and all-day kindergarten. He also commented on the water problems on peoples' properties and asked why they aren't fixed and why the town isn't addressing it. He noted how neighborhoods are assessed less due to those types of problems. He commented on the sidewalks on Morrison Avenue. Mr. Young commented on the unemployment rate in this country and the college graduates who are looking for work to pay off their loans. He spoke of the high taxes in this town and how he resents it. He commented on how the senior citizens struggle to pay their taxes. Mr. Young urged the council to stop raising taxes. He urged the Mayor to do something about the seniors, empty nesters and the young people who cannot find jobs.

Christina Sorano, Frank's daughter, commented that she is 21 years old and graduated WHS in 2009; she watched her father go through this for the past seven years. She watched him being frustrated, angry and upset that nothing has been done about their water problem. Her father has a beautiful landscape and it is sad to see it go down the drain because nobody is doing anything. She has mold in her room because of the water coming in; she couldn't sleep in her room. She believes that it is wrong the town doesn't help them with the water problem and now they have leave.

Pat Yagmin, 27 Jay Street, commented that Frank Sorano is her cousin and it is frustrating and sad to see this happening. She commented that this is a dangerous and emergency situation for human beings and that the Town should get to work and do their job.

COUNCIL REPORTS

Deputy Mayor Console reported that the Public Safety Committee had a meeting tonight in and in attendance was himself, Mr. Bridges, RaeAnn Palmer, Mr. Drake, Mr. Hurley and Miss Roberts. He noted that they discussed the contract for the ambulance company which they will be talking about tonight under section 3e. He stated the Town is in pretty good shape. The contract looks pretty good and it hasn't been adjusted since back in the early 80's. It is going to be looked at every year. He noted that we are all in agreement in what has to be done and moving forward with this and is very pleased that we now have something in place to go by to continue the service of the Volunteer Ambulance Company and also with Aetna Insurance Company.

Councilor Drake reported that tomorrow night the school project of Wethersfield High School is hopefully hiring the construction manager so everything seems to be going on schedule. Once the

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construction manager is in place with the architect and design we can start moving forward and things will start moving very quickly so things seem to be on track.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Deputy Mayor Console commented on the Jameswell Road area and stated that he had been an advocate of Mr. Sorano for many years. He stated that he was involved in the tour quite a few years back and acknowledged that nothing has ever been done regarding the situation and agrees that there is something wrong and that something has to be done. Councilor Console assured Mr. Sorano that he will continue to be an advocate for him in the future and will continue to do what he can for them.

Councilor Roberts responded to Deputy Mayor's comments regarding the water problem on Jameswell Rd. She stated that they all went out to the neighborhood and she didn't know that anybody's done more or less on the Council. She noted that they have had the Town look at it, the town manager look at it, and others, but as far as she knew, it's never been bumped up on Capital Improvements. She stated that she doesn't believe that anyone has put anything forward specifically to make it out of order or given priority and if that is where the Council feels where we need to go, then we should do it as a Council. She stated that her understanding is that they have all worked on it and tried to resolve it, but ~~am~~ as a lay person on this ~~so do~~ *she does* not really know more than what she is hearing from the town staff. She noted that that is a discussion we need to see if we want to bump it forward and put it up on top of the ~~capital~~ *capital* improvement list.

Councilor Kotkin asked Mr. Bridges for an update on where we stand on Jameswell Road?

Mr. Bridges replied that years ago, the town initiated a very limited hydrologic study in the area in the entire neighborhood with some monitoring of wells and so forth. He stated that the study concluded that the next phase of the project was \$100,000 hydrological study and that study to date has not been funded.

Councilor Kotkin asked what would it take to fund it, the Council or Capital Improvements?

Mr. Bridges replied that the Council could make it a priority and staff would be obligated to find the dollars and initiate the hydrologic study.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Bridges reported that after about a 10-year hiatus, the town once again has received the Government Finance Association Award (GFOA) for excellence in financial reporting from the GFOA. He reported that Susan Smith, the Finance Director, applied for it and provided the necessary documentation and appropriate consolidated financial report and submitted it to the GFOA to win the award this year. Mr. Bridges stated that it is another big achievement and helps us in the long run with our financial position. He reported that RaeAnn was also notified that a grant that she worked on with the Energy Committee person for additional alternative fuel

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vehicles was awarded. Mr. Bridges stated that we now have four additional vehicles that we will have partial grants for next year and added that it was good news for today.

COUNCIL ACTION

Deputy Mayor Console moved **“TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE REFUNDING OF GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS”** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

Mr. Bridges reported that as we stated at the last meeting at the introduction, there is an opportunity based upon information provided by Webster Bank, our town financial advisor, to refund between \$6 and \$8 million dollars of existing general obligation debt and very similar to what Mr. Ruhe said--it is like refinancing your home, but the biggest single difference is we don't extend the term of the bonds. Mr. Bridges explained that it is not like we take a 20-year bond and pay 10 years on and make it a new 20-year bond. He added that whatever the term is of the existing debt, we will stay within that term. He explained that it's just that when you look at general obligation debt you have your bonds that are 10 years and on, the bonds usually have a higher interest rate where it works for the investor. Mr. Bridges noted that what we do is refund those and give them new interest rates that are a lower rate. He added that based upon the information that we heard today from Webster Bank, the interest rates are not only holding but they are going down so the savings could increase as we get closer to the refunding. He noted that the Staff has recommended approval of the resolution in authorizing the refunding of the general obligation bonds.

Councilor Kotkin asked Mr. Bridges about some additional savings that is quoted in their documentation. A brief discussion then ensued amongst the council members.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 6-0-0.

OTHER BUSINESS

Councilor Deputy Mayor Console moved **“TO AUTHORIZE THE TRANSFER OF \$2,500 FROM THE PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT TO THE COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND, FARMER’S MARKET ACCOUNT TO MATCH CT GROWN JOINT VENTURE GRANT AWARD”** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

Mr. Bridges requested RaeAnn Palmer to give the description of the motion.

RaeAnne Palmer reported that the Farmers Market market masters, who are both volunteers, Douglas Sacks and Stephanie Jarm asked to prepare a grant application to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture to apply for a \$2500 grant from the state which has to be matched by \$2500 from the town to be used for marketing Connecticut Grown and noted that the attachments show a list of things that they want to do with it. She stated that it was mostly advertising and signage for the new expanded market at the Solomon Wells House and also for the winter market that they expect to do. She noted that it is extremely busy and that the vendors were mostly sold

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out this past Thursday.

Councilor Kotkin asked if this transfer was from within current year's budget and not the 2012/2013 budget.

RaeAnn responded that that is correct and that it is money that was set aside for marketing and supporting EDIC activities and stated that they will transfer it into the escrow account so that we can keep track altogether and stated that they still pay all the bills for the farmer's market.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 6-0-0.

Councilor Hurley moved **"TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN MANAGER TO EXECUTE A LEASE AGREEMENT WITH METRO PCS FOR SPACE ON THE TOWN OWNED COMMUNICATIONS TOWER AT 250 SILAS DEANE HIGHWAY**, seconded by Deputy Mayor Console.

Mr. Bridges requested RaeAnn Palmer, who worked with the town attorney on this lease to describe it to the council.

RaeAnn reported that this lease would use the last in space on the tower behind the Police Department. She noted that about a year ago they had the tower modified and those modifications were paid for by Clear Wire and by Verizon so that we could increase the tower's capacity and add more antennas. She noted that, unfortunately, after they paid for the modifications, Clearwire, the broadband business, kind of folded and walked away from it. She added that in the interim, Metro PCS wants to get on the tower in that space. She explained that now that modifications were done, the money did not change hands from the town, so the money went directly from the vendors to URS Structural Compliance, who did the work so the town did not have a hand in that. She noted that what we put in this lease is a clause that protects the town should Clearwire come back and ask for the funding that they paid for. She stated that this lease give us \$30,000 a year with a 3% per year escalator on the rent. It's a five-year lease and it renews automatically. She added that it helps support the operation of the radio system and stated that we spend about \$265,000 a year operating the radio system and with this lease it will be up around \$280,000 in revenue from the towers.

A discussion then ensued regarding Metro PCS and inspection of the towers.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 6-0-0.

Councilor Hurley moved **"TO APPROVE THE TENTATIVE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD AND THE WETHERSFIELD NURSES ASSOCIATION REGARDING PENSION BENEFITS**, seconded by Deputy Mayor Console.

Jeff Bridges reported that the Board of Education has all of the requests of the town council in amending their pension contracts with the noncertified unions to close the defined benefit

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pension to new employees and in their attentive agreement with the Wethersfield Nurses Association. He stated that they have agreed to the changes mirroring what we have instituted for the other town unions, basically, that after the effective date of the contract, the defined benefit plan would be closed and the union employees would be on a 401K and the existing defined benefit pension employees would pay an additional percentage towards the benefit and receive an enhanced benefit going forward but it's paid for by their enhanced contributions. He stated that it is exactly the same as what we have done for the other unions on the town side.

Councilor Kotkin commented on the pension contract changes and expressed how this change will be good for tax payers now and into the future.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 6-0-0.

Councilor Hurley moved **“TO AUTHORIZE APPROVAL OF THE TENTATIVE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD AND THE CSEA / SEIU / LOCAL 201, CTW SECRETARIAL / CLERICAL / PARAPROFESSIONAL UNION REGARDING CHANGES TO PENSION BENEFITS,** seconded by Deputy Mayor Console.

Mr. Bridges reported that this is very similar to the prior agenda item. He explained the difference in this one is that this contract expired in 2011 and it has taken them until now to come up with the tentative agreement. He noted that its effective date is 2011, retroactive to 2011, the pension change is effective July 1, 2012. Other than that, it is identical to the prior agenda item and identical to the other changes that we made for the other unions in town.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 6-0-0.

Councilor Deputy Mayor Console moved **“TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN MANAGER TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH WETHERSFIELD VOLUNTEER AMBULANCE ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROVISION OF AMBULANCE SERVICE IN THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD,** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

Mr. Bridges thanked the Wethersfield Volunteer Ambulance Association and Aetna Ambulance for all the time that was spent on this contract to come up with a reasonable solution for everybody. He stated that the current contract was drafted in the 1980s and this contract basically updates a lot of language updates on how the field in general has changed and clarifies the roles and responsibility for all parties between the town and Wethersfield Ambulance Association. He noted that as Deputy Mayor Council noted this evening, the committee did review it earlier tonight and found it acceptable and the staff would recommend its approval.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 6-0-0.

Deputy Mayor Console moved **“TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN MANAGER TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH WETHERSFIELD VOLUNTEER AMBULANCE ASSOCIATION AND AETNA AMBULANCE SERVICE, INC. FOR THE PROVISION OF**

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SUPPLEMENTAL AMBULANCE AND PARAMEDIC SERVICES IN THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD, seconded by Councilor Hurley.

Mr. Bridges reported the current contract between the town and Wethersfield Volunteer Ambulance dates back to the mid-1990's. He stated that it is part of the process with the prior agenda item that we updated the contract between Aetna and WVAA and again it was a very conscientious negotiation on all parts and everybody came together. He stated that everyone was very reasonable and at the end of the day everyone understood where we needed to be. He also thanked Aetna Ambulance for their participation as well and thought it was all a very good process. Mr. Bridges then stated that the staff recommends the approval of the third-party agreement. He stated that Aetna's role in this is to cover when the VAA is not on and to provide back-up paramedic support or paramedic support to WVAA on a level of service that they don't have in-house. Mr. Bridges noted that overall, he thought it was a good contract and all the parties came together and came up with something that is good for everybody.

Councilor Kotkin asked Mr. Bridges if he can go over some of the quality control provisions within the contract. A discussion then ensued regarding the use of a Quality Control Committee which was built into the contract which would manage quality of care issues.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 6-0-0.

BIDS

No Bids.

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION

No Ordinances for introduction.

MINUTES

Councilor Kotkin moved **“TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES OF MAY 2, 2012**, seconded by Deputy Mayor Console.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 6-0-0.

Councilor Kotkin moved **“TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF MAY 21, 2012**, seconded by Deputy Mayor Console.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 5-0-1. Councilor Hurley abstained.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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Frank Sorano, 102 Jameswell Road, provided an update on the water situation. He stated that the Professors at UCONN were probably the best geologists in the state. He added that as of Friday, CNG, who put in gas lines last year had to repave almost every single patch on the road because they sank. He stated that he was standing out in the basement with some neighbors on Sunday and the water coming through the patches was amazing. It was coming into the road from the patches and they were totally filled with water and noted that the water was not going to the sewers. He also noted that his big concern right now is the structure of the road and believes there are sink holes already under it. He stated that this is at the intersection of Jamewell and Dix Road. He commented that town roads are being affected by this and he urged the Town to move this problem up to the top of their list.

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Ave., commented that he hopes that the Town is looking at what MDC is doing. He added that we should have a good drainage system and that should be addressed when work is being done.

George A. Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Cir., commented on the drainage problems and questioned funding in Capital Improvements for this situation. Mr. Ruhe then commented about funding for projects being put off for years down the road. He stated that as the Council and committees change, the priorities change and projects that were scheduled to be done are now put on the bottom of the priority list. He suggested that the Council should follow through on the priority projects and make sure they happen in a timely manner. Mr. Ruhe questioned the inability of the Town to purchase the parts for the fire alarm system at Hanmer School and suggested searching the internet for parts to purchase.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Rd. commented that we take on too many projects and not the issues that should be taken care of. Mr. Young commented on the full-day kindergarten classes and the number of children who would be attending and the cost associated with full-day kindergarten. He stated that there were a lot of projects that should have been going forward, but did not go forward.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:30 p.m., Councilor Kotkin moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Hurley. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 6-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk
Approved by Vote of Council
June 18, 2012

Minutes were amended to reflect a statement revision made by Councilor Roberts and to correct a grammatical error on page 4. See changes made on page 4 of the minutes.